

U.S. Denies Reds' Charge Of Intrusion

By George C. Wilson
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The Defense Department yesterday virtually confirmed that North Korean fighters had shot down an unarmed American reconnaissance plane with 31 men aboard.

The same statement held out little hope for finding any survivors in the Sea of Japan.

"All evidence now available to us," the Pentagon said in its statement, "including North Korean claims and debris sightings, leads us to believe that the aircraft was shot down by North Korean aircraft.

"Regretfully," the statement continued, "there has been no report of survivors."

The downed plane—a Navy EC-121—was a military version of the old propeller-driven Lockheed Super Constellation. Its mission was to listen to North Korean radio and radar as it lumbered along offshore.

The Pentagon, after limiting itself on Tuesday to saying the pilot was under orders to stay at least 50 nautical miles off the North Korean coast, went further yesterday.

"From a variety of sources, some of them sensitive," the Pentagon said, "we are able to confirm that at all time during its mission the aircraft was far outside any claimed territorial air space of North Korea."

North Korea claims air and sea limits of 12 miles.

The Defense Department also portrayed the ELINT, or electronic intelligence, mission as a "routine reconnaissance track over international waters."

"During the first three months of 1969," the Department added, "there were 190 flights similar in nature flown in this general area."